



Canal Road - Scenic Byway

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THE BYWAY AND ITS CONTEXT

Describing the Corridor

Regional Setting

The Canal Road Scenic Byway corridor extends from the District of Columbia-Maryland line on the northwestern side of Washington, DC, to the western end of Pennsylvania Avenue via the Clara Barton Parkway, Canal Road, and M Street. As shown on the regional map, the Canal Road Scenic Byway corridor is accessible by vehicle from regional highways, parkways, and city streets. Approaches from the east and west are best because they join the corridor at its terminal points.

From the northwest, the Canal Road Scenic Byway corridor can be accessed from the DC Beltway (I-95/I-495) at exit 40/41, which connects to the byway via Clara Barton Parkway. From the west, it can be accessed by Highway 123 (Chain Bridge Road) and the connection at the Chain Bridge across the Potomac River. From the south, Francis Scott Key Bridge provides the connection to Canal Road from I-66, the Washington Parkway, Route 50, and Route 29. The entrance to the Whitehurst Freeway marks the southeastern end of Canal Road, which then merges into M Street in the Georgetown district of Washington, DC. Both M Street and the Whitehurst Freeway connect the eastern part of the city to the Canal Road byway.

Canal Road also intersects with Arizona Road and Reservoir Road on its northern side. These city roads provide access to Canal Road from the Palisades and Foxhall residential communities.

Corridor Description

The Canal Road Scenic Byway borders the Chesapeake & Ohio National Historical Park in the District of Columbia. It skirts Georgetown University, one of the city's, and the nation's, major institutions of higher education, before running for about three

miles through a country-like setting of mature trees and shrubs, with the canal and the Potomac River on one side and the rocky formation of the Potomac Palisades on the other. Through this natural remnant, visitors can sense the authentic feel of the City of Washington in its earliest years, when first the roadway and then the canal provided a vital link between the Georgetown seaport and the farms and plantations of Maryland and Virginia beyond.



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REGIONAL MAP

Canal Road Scenic Byway



Fig. 2-1

CORRIDOR SEGMENTS

THE BYWAY AND ITS CONTEXT

Describing the Corridor

The Canal Road Scenic Byway corridor serves as a main east-west artery into the central portions of the District of Columbia. At its eastern gateway at M Street and Pennsylvania Avenue in Georgetown, the corridor serves as a major access route connecting downtown Washington, DC with western and northern areas of the District, northwestern Maryland, and, via Key Bridge, the northern Virginia suburbs. Near the corridor's western terminus at the Maryland state line, Canal Road also serves as a gateway to Washington from northern Virginia via Chain Bridge. Canal Road is the sole vehicular access roadway to portions of the C&O Canal in the District of Columbia west of Georgetown.

Within western portions of the District, the Canal Road Corridor, including M Street, functions as a major roadway connecting portions of Palisades, Foxhall, Foxhall Village, and Georgetown to the West End, Foggy Bottom, Downtown and the White House. The Canal Road Corridor also intersects with several north-south arteries such as Arizona and Wisconsin Avenues and Foxhall Road. Another important intersecting roadway is the Whitehurst Freeway, which intersects with Canal Road at Key Bridge. The Freeway is an important link to K Street and Downtown DC. In connecting central Washington with out-laying areas, major in-town destinations, and other major arteries, the Canal Road Corridor, including M Street, has become both an important commuter route and major downtown connector roadway.

Description of Segments

Clara Barton Parkway

The Clara Barton Parkway runs along the Maryland shore of the Potomac River between DC and the Capital Beltway I-495. The section included within the study corridor extends about 0.5 mile from the Maryland-DC boundary to Canal Road at the Chain Bridge. As a two-lane undivided roadway with a well-maintained, grassed shoulder and tree-lined sides, the roadway is a parkway in a natural setting.

Chain Bridge to Key Bridge

Extending from the Chain Bridge to the Key Bridge, this 3.2 mile segment is bordered by the vegetated bluff on one side and the historic C&O Canal wall on the other. In this section, Canal Road is predominantly a narrow two-lane undivided roadway without shoulders; however, north of the intersection with Arizona Avenue the roadway changes from two to three lanes in width, and south of the intersection with Foxhall Road, the roadway is four lane with an elevated median strip. The Canal Road has direct connections to three major, intersecting streets on the northern side: Arizona Avenue, Reservoir Road, and Foxhall Road. Also on Canal Road is the south entrance to Georgetown University. The only connection on the southern side is the difficult, angled driveway to the historic Abner Cloud House and the parking lot serving the Fletcher's Boat House concession area in the C&O Canal National Park.

Georgetown

The M street section of the corridor extends from the entrance to the Whitehurst Freeway, just east of Canal Road, to the intersection with Pennsylvania Avenue and 29th Street NW. This 0.7-mile segment is a truly urban section in contrast to the parkway like sections of Canal Road and the Clara Barton Parkway. With the character of a busy commercial street, flanked by buildings on both sides, the four-lane M street section of the corridor is a popular destination for arts, culture, and commerce in the historic Georgetown district of the city. M Street is included as part of the Canal Road Scenic Byway because of its proximity with the C&O Canal (generally, a block or two south of M Street), the continuity of historic context and character, and the important connection to the Pennsylvania Avenue Scenic Byway to the east.



Clara Barton Parkway



Chain Bridge to Key Bridge



Georgetown